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EPA Receives Overwhelming Support at Public Meetings in Bristol Bay

Anchorage, AK – Eight public meetings held by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over the past week and a half on its Draft Bristol Bay Watershed Assessment drew nearly 2,300 attendees and about 450 oral comments, according to a tally compiled by BBNC (see attached). A clear majority of the public comment—more than 80 percent—was supportive of EPA’s work on the assessment.

Support for the watershed assessment was highest in the Bristol Bay region, where 1,000 people attended; more than 90 percent of the 275 oral comments presented were in favor of EPA and the assessment.

“This overwhelmingly positive turnout shows that the region appreciates and supports EPA’s effort and the appropriate urgency with which it is being handled,” said Jason Metrokin, President and CEO of Bristol Bay Native Corporation. “That EPA could gather more than a thousand pages of evidence showing certain risk to salmon habitat and our way of life—based on existing, published science—underscores just how serious the threat is from large-scale development such as the proposed Pebble mine, and how critical the need is for action to protect our region.”

The region was supportive because “the findings are in line with our traditional knowledge,” said BBNC Board Chairman Joe Chythlook. Turnout demonstrates that EPA’s timeframe for receiving public comment by July 23 is more than sufficient, he added. “Even though people in the region are busy with commercial and subsistence fishing preparations, most have been prepared for the release of the assessment for some time now.”

About BBNC: BBNC is one of 13 Alaska Native Regional Corporations formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. The corporation has over 9,000 Eskimo, Aleut, and Athabascan shareholders with ancestral ties to the Bristol Bay region. BBNC supports responsible resource development, defined as development that is fiscally, environmentally and socially sustainable, serving the long-term interests of our people, our region, and our businesses. More information can be found at www.bbnc.net.

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